The Chronicle and Index

OF THE UNITARIAN SOCIETY.

No. 79, Vol. vii.] BELFAST, JULY 1st, 1887. [For Gratuitous Circulation.

Subscriptions in aid of the gratuitous publication of the *Chronicle and Index* will be gladly acknowledged by the Rev. J. C. Street.

Our reference last month to a possible conference between the members of the two Belfast Unitarian Societies has been taken up by the British and Foreign Unitarian Association, who have written to both Societies, and suggested such a conference, offering at the same time to appoint a committee from London to meet with them and try to bring about a union. The Unitarian Society, Belfast, has unanimously and heartily agreed to enter such a conference, and do all in its power to facilitate a union which would not compromise the principles of either Society. We wish all success to such an effort.

We are delighted to notice another distinction gained at Cambridge by our brilliant friend, Mr. H. D. Darbishire. This time he has won a Foundation Scholarship at St. John's, and his name appears second on a list of thirteen successful scholars. After every examination now we look, and not in vain, for new honors and distinctions for our friend.

The London Anniversaries in connection with the Unitarian body were largely attended this year, and were animated by a healthy and progressive spirit. All parts of the United Kingdom were well represented, and there were visitors from the United States of America, Holland, Japan, and other countries. An excellent spirit pervaded all the meetings, and the signs of progress were of an encouraging character. Our own Societies were represented by the Revs. T. Dunkerley, and J. C. Street.

I am not a sad man. Spite of the experience of life, somewhat bitter, I am a cheerful, a joyous, and a happy man. But take away my consciousness of God; let me believe there is no Infinite God; no Infinite Mind which thought the world into existence, and thinks it into continuance; no Infinite Conscience which everlastingly enacts the eternal laws of the universe; no Infinite Affection which loves the world;—convince me that there is no God who watches over the nation; that "forsaken Israel wanders lone;" and that the lowly and the wretched have no Guardian,—then I should be sadder than Egyptian night! My life would be only the shadow of a dimple on the bottom of a little brook,—whirling and passing away; all the joy I have in the daily business of the world, in literature and science and art, in the friendships and wide philanthropies of the time, would perish at once, borne down in the rush of waters and lost in their headlong noise.—*Theodore Parker.*

Sunday, June 26th, was a great day in the Church of the Second Congregation, Belfast. It was the occasion of the Annual Flower Service. This has now become a great festival. For sixteen years a similar service has been held, and on each occasion with commanding success. The present year was no exception to the rule. For many days previous to the Sunday, arrangements were making, and friends were interesting themselves to provide flowers and foliage in such beauty and profusion as would enable the workers to transform the spacious church into a bower of beauty and delight. On Friday and Saturday many busy hands were pleasantly and laboriously at work. During both days gifts of flowers came pouring

in from town and country; and on Saturday, especially, the gifts were numerous and splendid. People of all denominations sent their floral offerings and good wishes. Cart, carriage, and railway all brought gifts, and numbers of people, children and adults, brought bouquets in their hands. Late on Saturday night a wonderful transformation had been effected, and vestibules, pulpit, windows, brackets, and choir gallery were made beautiful and fragrant, and the spacious church, like a garden of the Lord, was ready for the children, who should pour into it for enjoyment and delight. Many lent a helping hand, and while the many were toiling at their labour of decoration, Mrs. Ritchie, of Ulsterville, was busy catering for their needs, so that the toilers should not work and starve. A spirit of help pervaded all who were present, and many were the friendly words spoken and kindly deeds done as the work progressed. At length Sunday came, and, long before the doors were open, crowds of children and their friends began to assemble. It was pleasant to see that arrangements had been made to supply every child, and indeed every adult who came without flowers, with a pretty bouquet, so that when at length the doors were opened, every person who entered the place contributed to its fragrance and floral decoration. Superintendent and teachers were all busy shewing people to their places, and before 4 o'clock the spacious church was crowded by a most animated audience. In the pulpit, which was charmingly decorated, were Mr. R. M'Calmont, Rev. G. W. Reynolds, Rev. Mr. Wetherall, and Rev. J. C. Street. Mr. M'Calmont gave out the first hymn, and Mr. Reynolds offered prayers, and gave out hymns. Mr. Wetherall also gave out a hymn, and then the address was delivered by the Rev. J. C. Street. He founded his remarks on a verse from one of the hymns—

> There is never a day so sunny,
> But a little cloud appears;
> There is never a day so happy,
> But it has its time of tears.
> Yet the sun shines out the brighter
> Whenever the tempest clears.

Everyone listened with attention. The hymns, which were special for the occasion, were well sung; the organ music was exhilarating, and the whole service was most inspiring. The people and children lingered after the service was over to enjoy gazing upon the flowers, and at last reluctantly went away after a happy time spent at the beautiful "Floral Service."

SOME members of the Non-Subscribing Association (?) are desirous that it should take one step further. It is proposed to strike out from its roll the name of the Second Congregation, Belfast, and to put the ban of excommunication upon it. The Second Congregation has been a constituent part of the Association from the date of its establishment; but it has protested against making what was, at the beginning, a declaration of the principles of its founders into a creedal test of membership, and it continues to affirm that there should be no dogmatic test whatever. For this consistent non-subscribing attitude the congregation is threatened with expulsion. And this is non-subscription?

OUTLINES OF LECTURES TO YOUNG MEN.

BY JAMES C. STREET.

HOW SHALL I REACH MY HOME? No. 6.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.—In the course over which we have travelled during my previous Lectures we have studied a young man's "aims," "temptations," "battles," "helpers," and "paths of life," and have found much, I trust, to assist us in making the best of ourselves, our capacities, our position, and our duties. But we have not exhausted our inquiries. All that we have yet seen or studied is compatible with our duty if our life is really measured by our earthly existence, and there is nothing beyond the confines of the grave. If we knew that death was the annihilation of our personality, not one word of what I have hitherto said and urged would be out of place. Even then the course of life I have indicated is the noblest, the purest, the happiest; and could not help but yield those fruits which would bring about the greatest joy to the individual, and the happiest results for our race.

But when we rise to gaze upon an *Infinite Future* which is our inheritance; and understand that our career here is only the preface to the limitless volume of life; that this world is only a prophecy of a world which will endure for ever; and that after our pilgrimage is over there is an Eternal Home awaiting us—then our previous words gain a measureless meaning, and are fraught with infinite consequences.

Now I do not stop to argue Job's question—"If a man die, shall he live again?" the *argument*, or even the *doubt*, lies outside my purpose at present; but I assume *Immortality* and treat of *our Father's Home as a Divine reality*.

We all feel that

> "The present is too short to last—
> The past is gone for ever by;
> The future comes—a stormy blast
> That sweeps us to eternity."—*Bowring*.

All our toil, and struggle, and upward endeavour; all our trials, temptations, and sorrows; all the chequered events of our life here, are to prepare us for the *Hereafter*. We are God's children—the offspring of His love—and our life here is but a journey home.

Here, then, arises our question, which challenges an answer—

HOW SHALL I REACH MY HOME?

I do not here enter upon the problem, What is to be the fate of the wicked? nor discuss the doctrine of eternal damnation. Enough to say that I believe suffering will always follow sin, but that I reject with horror the popular doctrine of an everlasting Hell. As solemnly as I can do, I warn you of the consequences of sin, and of the measureless woes which it brings upon the sinner. There is no escape from these so long as sin abounds. Do not cherish any delusions, and think you can cheat natural laws and the infinite God.

Look, then, at our question once more. You will see that it raises the old problem, "What shall I do to be saved?" or the nobler issue "How shall I bring myself into harmony with God?" Great theological problems are involved.

Now I want to say some very plain words. I may pain and shock some of you. I cannot help it. Remember, I was brought up in a school of what is called orthodoxy, and that, like the multitude, I believed the current theology of the churches. Only by slow and painful steps did I emerge from my prison-house, and enter upon what I believe is "the glorious liberty of the sons of God."

I take it that if, after long absence and much wandering from your earthly home and friends, you were going back to the old place, and the old loves, you would like to go strong, robust, pure-hearted, and gladsome, eager for the dear embrace and the hearty welcome. In going to the Eternal Home, do you want to go maimed, broken down, tottering, and decrepit? Do you want to be so bankrupt in name and character, that you must needs send some one to plead your cause? to suffer punishment for you, that your backs may be spared? Do you want rewards which you never earned? Love which you do not deserve? Blessings which of right belong to some one else?

The popular theology represents you as utterly bad; it tells you that your natures are altogether sinful; it dins into your ears the statement that you can do no good thing; you are moral wrecks; if you are to get home it will not be because you desire to go; or have any right to go; but because some one else has died for you; borne your sins and sufferings; removed God's anger from you; and won for you blessings to which you have not even the faintest shadow of a claim. You are told that if you get home at all—and that only a few of you will—it will be solely because of the mercy of God.

Am I misrepresenting the churches? What is the nature of all this teaching? I tell you it is utterly immoral and degrading; it libels your nature; it argues away your capacity for good; it dishonours God; it places Jesus in a false position, and it sends those few of you who are saved into your Father's home broken down, unworthy, unheroic men, with nothing of your own that is noble or good, and nothing which is deserving of the supreme endowment of immortal life.

Now I tell you to throw aside all this theological chaff; to scatter it to the winds of heaven; and to look at the great problem of

your destiny from quite another and a far loftier point of view.

On one phase of this orthodox teaching I am in agreement; it is, that we owe all our blessings, whether for this life, or the life which is to come, to the mercy of God. To His boundless and infinite goodness we owe more than tongue can utter or the heart conceive.

But God is all good, and all His ways are good. When He sends his children here, and tells them of the home He has prepared for them, He does not send them with depraved natures and mutilated capacities, and then demand from them impossible virtues and unattainable graces. He plants the Divine nature in us, and sets a great career before us, and sends innumerable helpers and guides; but then He lays upon us trusts and responsibilities, and requires our fidelity, our devotion, and our full obedience.

From this vantage ground let us look at our question.

Let me lay down a chart of the road along which you must travel to reach your home.

1. To revere and love God.
2. To honor and love men.
3. To make duty your first object.
4. To keep your bodies pure from evil passions.
5. To keep your souls clean from moral pollution.
6. To be truthful and truth loving.
7. To keep before you the example of the noble.
8. To live with eternity in view.

Now, to obey these rules of life will clear your mind of mere dogmas, and creeds, and confessions; you will see how sublime a thing it is to live; and you will understand that we carry with us into the future world the characters, dispositions, and tastes that we have gathered in this. "Of old time," says Parker, "Michael Angelo took his copies from the persons in the streets, and wrought them out on the walls and the ceiling of the Vatican, changing a beggar into a giant, and an ordinary woman, who bore a basket of flowers on her arm, into an angel; and the beggar and flower-girl stand there now in their lustrous beauty, speaking to eyes that wander from every side of the green world. The rock slumbered in the mountain, and he reached his hands out and took it, and gathered the stones from the fields about him, and built them into that awful pile, which, covering acres on the ground, reached up its mighty dome towards heaven, constraining the mob of the city to bow their foreheads and to vow great prayers to God. So, my brothers, out of the common events of life, out of the passions put by God into your hearts, you may paint on the walls of your life the fairest figures, angels and prophets. Out of the common stones of your daily work you may build yourself a temple which shall shelter your head from all harm, and bring down on you the inspiration of God."

Remember the great truths Longfellow teaches in his poem, "The Ladder of St. Augustine":—

> All common things, each day's events,
> That with the hour begin and end,
> Our pleasures and our discontents,
> Are rounds by which we may ascend.
>
> The low desire: the base design
> That makes another's virtues less;
> The revel of the ruddy wine,
> And all occasions of excess;
>
> The longing for ignoble things;
> The strife for triumph more than truth;
> The hardening of the heart, that brings
> Irreverence for the charms of youth;
>
> All thoughts of ill; all evil deeds,
> That have their root in thoughts of ill;
> Whatever hinders or impedes
> The action of the nobler will.
>
> All these must first be trampled down
> Beneath our feet, if we would gain
> In the bright fields of fair renown
> The right of eminent domain.

When we have done this—obeyed the higher law of God—and followed the Divine call, we shall at length enter with joy our Father's home.

THE Rev. J. H. BIBBY, as the retiring Moderator of the Remonstrant Synod, delivered the following address at Banbridge:—The position we are in this day is as unique as the day itself on which we meet is unique. I may venture to say that it is unlikely that any other church corporation is sitting at this time within the shores of the United Kingdom. Our thoughts naturally turn to-day to the Jubilee which has only now been

consummated. We cannot help thinking of the progress which has been made during the reign of our beloved Queen, whom may God long keep with us and bless; and this reign is memorable in many ways, memorable for its increasing love of fair play and justice, memorable for its growing loyalty, memorable for its social march onward, its educational advantages, its political freedom, its mammoth spread of empire, and more than all the spread of religious freedom, and the growth of the Church of God in all the earth. We have reason to be jubilant and thankful for so long continued a reign as her Majesty's has been, and it is a fit and proper thing that we should offer national thanksgiving and praise to the King of kings, for all He has helped us to do during the Queen's peaceful reign. We owe much to her, perhaps more than we are thankful for. This good woman will come to be spoken of as one of the wisest women that ever lived. She has been wise and faithful as the constitutional ruler of a great free people, and she has shown such womanly sympathy for all them that suffer, that we may well say the woman was never lost in the Queen. Indeed, more than all else, it is the sympathy in her that has taken our hearts and made us loyal. I often think of those words of Shakespeare, "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown," when I remember how much dramatic interest a people has in its public personages. Her life and person bound, imprisoned as they are in royal trappings, and lifted up high that she may be seen by all men; these but tend to verify the old poet's words. But to me, as with Robert Collyer in his review of the Queen's last book of her "Life in the Highlands," "the story of her life is not the story of the Queen of Great Britain so much as the story of a woman who was left a widow, with many children to fend for and train up, please God, to be good men and women, and goes mourning through these years after the lover of her youth, the father of these children, who has been taken while she is left, and finds it hard to believe, as so many good women do besides, that we must never call them fatherless who have God and their mother; a woman who cannot forget the brave, bright days when her life was so full of blessing—not because she was a queen, but a good man's wife, and a man who, when things went against them, used to say, 'Let us make the best of them,' the man she had chosen out of all the world to be her housebond, and when her choice was made never had a second thought, but wrought her love into the Idylls of a Queen fairer than any her Laureate has sung. Who in these later years can see no spot on which they once stood together, looking at the mountains or the sea, which does not bring back something of the awful and enduring sorrow? and yet, as you read on, lets you into the secret of the sweet leniency of time to heal us all, and the consolations of God, which come through the faith that she will find him again whom she has lost." It is this womanliness in her, more than aught else, that stirs up my loyalty most, and for that as much as anything else, I offer thanks to you to-day that I am privileged to bear my testimony. Moreover, the progress we have made as a nation during her reign, is without its like in history's page. Who dare think for a moment of putting the finger of time back again to this day fifty years ago, and with that backward movement do away with all that has happened within that period? Think of the knowledge that has grown from more to more, the great souls that have made this period shine, the growth of literature, the growing philanthropy and spreading benevolence, the purity of home life, and the marvellous reformation made by the temperance movement. This is not the jubilee merely of our Queen, but of many blessings which have come to us during her kindly reign. Above all, is there not a deeper reverence for divine things in our midst? God is no longer the terrible one who for His own glory blesses or condemns his creatures; but He is the God and Father of Jesus Christ, whom no man need fear since he is love—love itself. In summing up the changes of the last fifty years, a popular writer speaks of two changes for which we can never be sufficiently thankful; and one of these changes is the decay of the old Calvinism. That is gone; the chief terror of life is gone too;

the chief sting of death is gone; the terrible, awful question which reasoning man could not refrain from asking is gone too. Many a bloodless revolution has taken place during the Queen's reign, but there is none so marked as this great theological revolution which has almost done away with creeds, and gone back to the Christian test of judging the tree by its fruit—of leaving the sinner not to a blind fate of heaven or hell, but in the hands of the just and merciful Judge, who will know to do right. Surely no Church can so heartily join in the spirit of to-day's rejoicing as this Church of ours, for our theology is winning all the way through, and it may be that soon our work will be done, because the old doctrine of the Trinity shall have been cast aside, the old lie of hell shall be no more, and we shall with all Christians be worshipping together the one God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. To turn to the work we have done during the year, I think we may say that it was honest and thorough as far as circumstances would allow. After referring to congregational matters in Ballymena, the Moderator continued—I am not so sure that it is a happy thing that the old days, fighting days of controversy, are over, and that as a Church we are now enjoying the piping times of peace. Our fathers had to fight, and in fighting they gained strength and territory. Then a Unitarian's creed was marked off from the Trinitarian's, and woe unto the man that removed his neighbour's landmark. Now the frontier is a scientific one, whatever that may be. I am not saying that we cannot fight. Nay, we feel as strongly as the old men did; we love truth as much; we believe as firmly, and would suffer as bravely if we were called upon so to do. Aye, there's the rub—if we were called upon to do so. But we are not called upon so to do, and so our weapons are rusting for want of use, our limbs are softening for want of exercise, and the enemy is upon us, dealing us and ours such deft blows that the battle is lost to us before we know it. Assimilation into other Churches this is called; but, sirs, I would call it poisoning, slow poisoning. Brethren, we Unitarians pride ourselves upon our eminent respectability. Well, that is a fact: we are respectable—too respectable by half; indeed, we are quite mildewed with respectability, and some of these fine mornings we shall waken up to find that sinners whom Christ came to save will have nothing to do with us. I believe in a missionary spirit both at home and abroad, and I am sure of one thing in the life of any religious community, that where one branch is healthy the other is also vigorous. It is a question worthy our consideration. What has become of all the members of this dead church! They are not all dead, surely. In a book the pages of which ministers turn over sometimes, you will find a reference to a lion lying down with a lamb. That is what has happened to these limp Unitarians—they have lain down with the lion after he has swallowed them. This is a parable. The lion is orthodoxy, the lamb's name is heterodoxy. The lamb does lie with the lion—inside. And worse than all, does not much hurt the lion's digestion. The same beast would gladly swallow us all up, Remonstrants though we be. This is very disquieting to us as a church corporation, but it is a matter for which we have cause of thankfulness and gratitude to Almighty God, that at length it is possible for a Christian man to hold doubts of certain so-called Christian doctrines and yet be thought none the worse Christian for all his doubts. But, brethren, does not this show to us the dishonesty of the theology of to-day. A theology which professes a God its ministers dare not preach, a hell they dare not paint, a heaven which no true-hearted man would care to set foot in. There is not a pulpit in this land in which Calvinism pure and simple is preached. I confess that it was quite refreshing to me to read a recent speech of Mr. Spurgeon's in which he says, "When I was a boy I used to hear sermons about escaping from the wrath to come, and I used to be told that if men perished in their sins there is a dreadful hell and everlasting pain. That testimony is very much confined now, and I am very sorry for it. I believe that, in proportion as there is a doubt thrown upon that, there will be a cooling down in the ardour of Christian men in regard to these dying souls. Some may invent theories which will allow them to be quiet while men go down to hell. I cannot accept such a theory, and therefore I cannot rest without doing all I can myself; and I urge you to do all you can to pluck the firebrands from the flame, and save them from going down into the pit. We are destined to an immortality of honour and glory if we serve our Master well here below; but on the other hand, I cannot but regard a man living and dying in his sins as destined to a future of which I dare not speak." I say it is refreshing to meet with a plain consistent speaker like Mr. Spurgeon, and I verily believe that if all orthodox preachers would be as consistent to their creeds and dogmas as he is to his, our Unitarian Church would be second to none for numbers. Brethren, we must look to it or we shall be killed with kindness. As a Unitarian Church we have no worse foes than the liberal preachers of orthodoxy, but as Christian preachers we can only wish more power to them all. What remains then for us to do? Much

every way. Ours is a "theology of the heart;" our faith is that Christianity is not a creed but a motive power, and there remains to all of us the room to be original in being living witnesses to the faith. Believe me, brethren, there is no sight so original as an honest living witness for God's truth. We must preach this. Let us get this close home to our hearts, and we shall find that we have gone back to the time when Jesus was here among men. Such backward journeying would be a wonderful progress, for Christ is for ever above us, but thanks be unto God he is not beyond us; nay, is with us lifting us up, and encouraging us so that we be not weary in our welldoing. Let us preach God's blessed gospel as if we believed it. And now let me end by giving you a quotation from an address delivered on a like occasion, "It is not in any apologetic tone that we are to preach the gospel, as if begging to be excused in presence of an age of such boasted enlightenment, but in such a way as to show that we are not ashamed of it." It is not the rationale of the truth that we are to dwell upon so much as the truth itself. There is a danger here, and one to which we are a good deal exposed in these times. There are some even who do not seem able to celebrate the Holy Communion without going into minute explanations, and sometimes even controversial discussions in regard to the nature and purpose of it. They might as reasonably withhold the bread and wine until they had given a scientific account of them. That standing between the Master and His guests, as if he could not be trusted to speak to them in His own words, and do them good in His own way, is an illustration of a kind of teaching in other things to which some seem strongly tempted; and it cannot be regularly indulged in without a loss of practical power. Not the rationale of the things of God, let me repeat, not the philosophy of religion, but the divine verities themselves are the proper themes of the Christian ministry.

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Printed by JOHN A. MURPHY, 16, Howard Street, for the Unitarian Society, and Published at their Depository, 16, Queen's Arcade, Belfast.